

Remarks:

Reconsideration of this application in view of the following remarks is respectfully requested. Claims 1-8 and 10-13 are currently pending (whereas claim 9 was previously cancelled). Claims 1-8 and 10-13 presently stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious in view of Ashton et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,137,071) in combination with Nelson et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,458,306). In order to obviate these grounds of rejection, claim 1 has been amended to further patentably distinguish the presently claimed invention over the prior art. More specifically, claim 1 has been amended such that it now recites “applying a resin and a fiber material about and immediately adjacent to the bladder.” Support for these new claim limitations may be found in the Figures (as well as paragraph [0022] of the Specification). No new matter has been added.

Application respectfully submits that amended claim 1 (which requires that a resin and a fiber material be applied immediately adjacent to an elastic bladder layer – as opposed to being applied to an intervening non-elastic ABS layer) is patentably distinguishable over the prior art because, among other reasons, Ashton et al. clearly teaches away from the present invention. In this regard, Ashton et al. states the following:

It can therefore be seen that it is desired to have the foundation of a hard surface upon which to build a composite structure. The interior surface of the uncured portions of a composite structure needs to be placed against a hard structure, so as to eliminate distortion or sagging in the structure, prior to the curing process.

Ashton et al. at col. 2, lines 9-14 (emphasis added).

The uncured portions of the composite structure, such as the inserts and/or filament windings requires to form the structure, are therefore initially assembled on the hard surface of the ABS layer. Prior to the start of the cure of the composite structure pressure is applied to the back surface of the layer and heat is applied to the ABS layer to soften the layer, the pressure is applied to the back surface of the layer and heat is applied to the ABS layer to soften the layer, the pressure forcing the heat-softened layer and the assembled uncured portions of the composite structure outwardly into contact with the exterior mold surface.

Shrinkage of the composite structure due to the de-bulking process during the cure cycles is therefore entirely compensated for by the

softening of the ABS layer and its outward movement towards the exterior mold surface.

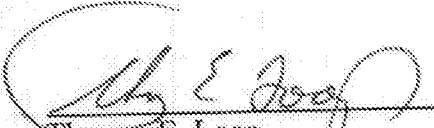
The ABS layer therefore provides a hard surface when needed during the assembly of the uncured portions of the composite structure, so as to allow the portions of the structure to be precisely positioned prior to the cure.

Ashton et al. at col. 3, lines 9-29 (emphasis added).

As is appreciated by those skilled in the art, ABS (acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene terpolymer) is a hard (but softenable) amorphous thermoplastic material; ABS is not elastomeric.

In view of the above remarks and claim amendments allowance of claims 1-8 and 10-13 is earnestly solicited. A good faith effort has been made to place this application in condition for allowance. If any further matter requires attention prior to allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney at (206) 568-3100 to resolve the same.

Respectfully submitted,


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